

new dynasty, the Wei. As we shall see a little later, a member of the Liu family professed to carry on the Han dynasty in what is now Szechwan. The main line of the Han, however, had come to an end. The actors in the drama were probably quite unaware of it, but a great period in the development of the Chinese nation had closed and the Middle Kingdom was entering another era of marked transition.

One phase of the activity of the Later Han must, because of its cultural consequences, be gone into with more detail than the brief summary in the last four paragraphs has permitted. The generals of the Later Han maintained and even strengthened Chinese might on the far western frontiers in what is now the New Dominion, and so kept open the overland routes to the West. The Hsiung Nu, to the immediate north and west, continued a menace and never could long be ignored. However, connections with the Yiieh Chih were kept up, although with at least one rift in the friendship, and the petty states in what is now the New Dominion, centering around such oases as the present Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, and Turfan, became tributary to China as a protection against the common enemy, the Hsiung Nu. The fact that at least the ruling classes in most—and possibly all—of these states were Iranian and the Hsiung Nu were of a very different race may have been an added incentive to seek Chinese assistance.

Under Ming Ti, the Hsiung Nu who had invaded what is now Kansu were crushed and the Chinese took possession of the present Kami, west of Kansu. This helped to revive Chinese prestige in the distant West and some of the states in that region

renewed their tributary connection with the Han. Chinese officials were soon appointed to supervise the subordinate principalities.

Probably the most famous of the Chinese agents in the far West was Pan Ch'ao (A.D. 32-102). Although the scion of a family noted for its literary accomplishments, brother of Pan Ku, the great historian, and of Pan Chao, China's most distinguished wornan-of-letters, he was more a man of action than a scholar. Weary of literary employment and petty official appointment at the capital which barely kept the wolf from the door, he determined to seek adventure and renown on the frontier. This he did, and there displayed such daring and ability that before